Levi Says He Favors Legislation to Limit the Tenure of the F.B.I.'s Director

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 21—Attorney General Edward H. Levi said today that he would favor legislation limiting the tenure of the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

He suggested that a term in office of about 10 years might be appropriate, although he said the precise number was not important.

Asked about a statutory limit on how many years an F.B.I. director could serve, on the CBS program "Face the Nation," Mr. Levi said, "I think that probably some limitation would be appropriate in view of history."

He did not say what history he meant, but presumably he was referring to recent disclosures of apparent abuses by the F.B.I. under the directorship of J. Edgar Hoover. Mr. Hoover died in 1972 after 48 years as chief of the bureau.

Mr. Levi also said today that a Federal law was needed to prevent future abuses by the F.B.I. He said that guidelines proposed by the Justice Department could be the basis for legislation for "the kind of regulations the bureau thinks it can live with."

In response to questions, Mr. Levi also said that the Justice Department might consider, among other alternatives, the appointment of a special prosecutor to reinvestigate the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He said that the Civil Rights Division of the Department was reviewing the entire collection of about 90 files on the King assassination to see if there were flaws in prior investigations.

He said that he would wait until the review was completed and recommendations made to him before making any statements about a special prosecutor or other actions.

On another issue, the Attorney General said that a constitutional amendment to forbid massive busing for school integration woud not be a "desirable path."

He said, "I don't think the school system should be run by the courts," but he added that "busing is one remedy, an equitable remedy, to try to make up for a violation of law in state-enforced discrimination."

The courts should and do look at other remedies and busing is the "last remedy," but it is one that is sometimes necessary, he said.

The Attorney General also made the following comments during the television broadcast:

¶He said he thought that the death penalty would be considered constitutional "if one conceded it's going to be equitably used and that there are proper standards."

¶Consideration is being given to the possibility that that Government will pay for lawyers for former President Richard M. Nixon in civil suits brought against him.

¶Government wiretaps on foreign embassies are justifiable if the information is important to the national security of the United States.

Mr. Levi also said that the Equal Rights Amendment "isn't needed" but had become a "symbolic point" and "symbolism is important."